

Jeremiah 35 — Obedience that Honors God

Introduction: A Family That Listened

When we read through Jeremiah 35, we encounter a remarkable contrast—a small family that obeyed their earthly ancestor versus an entire nation that refused to obey their heavenly Father.

The story of the Rechabites takes place during the reign of King Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah. Babylon’s armies are threatening Judah, fear fills the land, and yet God uses a humble, nomadic family to deliver a powerful lesson about faithfulness, integrity, and obedience.

This chapter invites us to ask ourselves: *Who has my ear—God or the world?* Obedience is not about religion or rules—it’s about relationship and reverence.

1. A Test of Obedience (Jeremiah 35:1–5)

“The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, ‘Go to the house of the Rechabites, speak to them, and bring them into the house of the Lord... and set before them wine to drink.’” (Jeremiah 35:1–2)

God commands Jeremiah to bring the Rechabite family into the temple and offer them wine. It seems like a simple test—but behind it lies a profound spiritual principle.

The Rechabites were descendants of Jonadab son of Rechab, who lived about 250 years earlier during the time of King Jehu (see 2 Kings 10:15–23). Jonadab had given his family strict instructions:

- Do not drink wine.
- Do not build houses.
- Do not plant fields or vineyards.
- Live in tents and remain separate from the corrupt city life.

Jeremiah places before them pots of wine and cups, saying, “Drink.”

2. A Family’s Faithful Resolve (Jeremiah 35:6–11)

“But they said, ‘We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, You shall drink no wine, you nor your sons forever.’” (Jeremiah 35:6)

The Rechabites refused Jeremiah’s offer—not out of rebellion, but out of conviction. They held fast to a command given centuries before.

They honored the voice of their ancestor because they valued obedience and integrity more than comfort or compromise. Even in Jerusalem, surrounded by temptation and pressure, they kept their word.

Application:

The Rechabites show us what it means to live by conviction, not convenience. They did not obey because it was easy, but because it was right.

In our generation, faithfulness is often dismissed as outdated. But God still delights in those who remain steadfast when others fold. The Rechabites remind us that true obedience endures even when culture changes.

Ask yourself: *Do I obey God only when it's convenient, or even when it costs me something?*

3. God's Rebuke to Judah (Jeremiah 35:12–17)

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction to obey My words? says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 35:13)

Through the example of the Rechabites, God exposes Judah's hypocrisy. Here was a small family that obeyed the command of a human ancestor given centuries ago—while an entire nation ignored the living God who had spoken to them repeatedly.

“The words of Jonadab... are performed... but I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking; yet you did not obey Me.” (Jeremiah 35:14)

God's heart is grieved: *“They obeyed their father. Why won't My children obey Me?”*

He reminds Judah that He sent prophets “rising early” (Jeremiah 35:15)—a Hebrew expression meaning *persistent, patient effort*. God never stopped calling His people to return, but they hardened their hearts.

Application:

Hearing God's Word is not the same as heeding it. Judah had the temple, the priests, and the prophets—but not obedience.

How many believers today sit under faithful biblical teaching yet leave unchanged? God is not looking for information stored in our minds, but transformation lived out in our hearts.

4. Judgment for the Disobedient, Blessing for the Obedient (Jeremiah 35:17–19)

“Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will bring on Judah... all the calamity I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them, but they have not heard.” (Jeremiah 35:17)

Judah's disobedience brought judgment—but God immediately turns to bless those who obeyed.

“And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites... Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father... Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever.” (Jeremiah 35:18–19)

The Rechabites were rewarded not for perfection, but for obedience. God promises that their family line will endure. History confirms that a remnant of their descendants continued to live in the land long after Judah's exile.

Application:

God honors faithfulness. Even when the world mocks obedience as “old-fashioned,” God still says, *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”* (Matthew 25:21)

What matters most is not our reputation before people, but our obedience before God. The Rechabites quietly lived their convictions, and God noticed.

5. The Spiritual Lesson: Faithfulness Over Formality

The people of Judah prided themselves on religious rituals, yet they lacked obedience. The Rechabites, by contrast, had no temple, no priests, no rituals—yet they lived in simple obedience to what they believed was right.

This is the heart of true worship: not empty religion, but daily obedience to the Lord.

“To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.” (First Samuel 15:22)

Practical Application:

- Faithfulness in the small things prepares you for greater responsibility.
- Consistency in obedience is more valuable than occasional emotional zeal.
- True holiness is found not in public performance but in private integrity.

A Challenge for Believers

The Rechabites remind us that obedience matters more than convenience. As believers, we are called to hold fast to the truth of God’s Word even when the culture around us abandons it.

Have you grown indifferent to God’s voice? Do you listen to sermons, read Scripture, and yet remain unchanged? God is still speaking—through His Word, through His Spirit, and through your circumstances.

The challenge is simple: Don’t just hear—heed.

Return to your first love. Renew your commitment to walk in holiness, humility, and truth.

“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1:22)

An Invitation to Non-Believers

The Rechabites honored their earthly father. But you have a heavenly Father calling you to Himself. His command is not to live in tents or abstain from wine—it is to turn from sin and receive His Son, Jesus Christ.

The same God who spoke through Jeremiah is speaking today through His Word. He calls you to repentance and new life.

When Jesus shed His blood on the cross, He paid the full price for your sin. When He rose from the dead, He declared Himself to be God, Savior, and Lord. Through Him, you can be forgiven, restored, and set free from the bondage of sin.

If you have never surrendered your life to Christ, you can do so right now. Pray from your heart:

“Lord Jesus, I believe that You died for my sins and rose again. I turn from my sin and ask You to forgive me. Come into my life, be my Savior and Lord, and help me to walk in obedience to Your Word. Amen.”

Conclusion: A Legacy of Obedience

Jeremiah 35 teaches us that faithful obedience leaves a lasting legacy. The Rechabites’ loyalty to their father’s instruction stands as a timeless reminder that God honors integrity, humility, and faithfulness.

They obeyed the voice of a man and were blessed. How much more should we obey the voice of the living God, who loves us, redeemed us, and gave His Son for our salvation?

Let us live in such a way that generations after us will say, *“They were faithful to the Lord.”*

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)